



News Release

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Is Your Child Ready to Breathe Easy This School Year?

UDOH says taking preventive measures can make a difference.

(Salt Lake City, UT) – A new Utah Department of Health (UDOH) campaign is encouraging parents of the more than 64,000 Utah children (2005 calculated estimate) with asthma to take preventive measures for a smooth transition as their children head back to school.

“Some children with asthma will have a rough time at the beginning of the school year,” said Libbey Chuy of the UDOH Asthma Program. “New environmental triggers in a school, like chemical vapors from art and chemistry classes, classroom pets and chalk dust—and even just the anxiety of starting something new—can be potential triggers.”

Kaleb Lee was diagnosed with asthma when he was just 18 months old, but the disease doesn’t keep him from being excited about starting 2nd grade and participating fully in PE and other classroom activities. “Now we are just a bit more careful,” said Kaleb’s father Chris Lee. “We talk to Kaleb’s teachers and make sure he has his inhaler filled before sending him off for the first day of school.”

Since being diagnosed, Kaleb has also learned to identify his own triggers, how to communicate how he feels with his teachers, and when and what medications to take so that his asthma is under control.

Like Kaleb and his family, the UDOH encourages parents of children with asthma to take preventive measures to ensure a smooth back-to-school transition.

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UDOH recommendations for those with asthma include:

1. Complete a Self-Administration form and turn it in to the School Nurse or office. This form allows children who are capable to carry and use their inhalers at school.
2. Ask your doctor for a written Asthma Action Plan – an individual guide that indicates what things to avoid and what to do in an emergency or during an asthma attack.
3. Encourage your student's PE teachers and coaches to complete the "Winning with Asthma" online educational program at www.WinningWithAsthma.org.
4. Check your child's medical charts to ensure his or her flu shots are up-to-date.

Asthma is one of the leading causes of school absenteeism for children in the United States. It often causes repeated episodes of wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness and coughing that can interrupt school activities. Although there is no known cure, asthma symptoms can generally be controlled.

For more information about asthma and to download the Self-Administration form, visit the UDOH Asthma Program at, www.health.utah.gov/asthma/backtoschool.html or call 1-888-222-2542.

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